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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Asad's Speech, Al-Hariri
Investigations, Syria/Israel (11/10-13)

1. Summary: Syrian papers over the weekend focused on President Asad's speech. Government-owned Tishreen and Al-Ba'th, which are usually not published on Fridays, appeared on Friday 11 November, along with the third official government-owned paper, Al-Thawra, to report on President Bashar Al-Asad's speech and the demonstrations in Damascus and other Syrian cities in support of Al-Asad and his positions. The papers published the full text of the speech and detailed reports and pictures from the various governorates on the solidarity demonstrations.

Papers cited Syrian, Arab and international reactions to the speech, including that of UN SecGen Kofi Annan, who expressed happiness at President al-Asad's pledge to cooperate with the UN inquiry into the killing of former PM Al-Hariri.

All papers carried a story about Louai Saqqa, a Syrian detainee in Istanbul reported to have received a proposition to give false testimony regarding the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in exchange for a large sum of money. His lawyer, Osman Karahan, said in a televised program broadcast by al-Jazeera that some foreigners visited the detainee at his prison and asked him to tell the international investigator of the Hariri assassination that a Syrian security official asked him to bring an Iraqi suicide bomber to declare his responsibility for the crime.

Papers reported President Asad's message of condolences and solidarity to King Abdullah of Jordan, condemning the terrorist attacks in Jordan.

End of summary.

2. Selected Headlines:

"Arab and international interest in President Asad's speech. The speech diagnosed the current situation and expressed the nation's aspirations" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 11/13)

"At the second session of the Forum For the Future in Manama Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara meets Bahraini Premier Sheikh Khalifa Ben Salman Al Khalifa, Arab League Secretary General Amr Mousa, High Representative for EU Foreign Policy and Security Javier Solana, Turkish Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, Deputy Italian Foreign Minister and Head of the Italian Delegation Alfredo Mantika. Al-Shara underscores the importance of preventing any deviation from the main mission of the international investigation" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 11/13)

"Day of Cohesion Between the People and the Leader; we refuse to bargain over dignity and sovereignty; the price of resistance is much lower than the price of chaos" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 11/11)

"Al-Asad makes a call of dignity and brave Syria responds; the age of tutelage is over; Bashar will not be the one who lowers his head or the head of his people to anyone" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 11/11)

"The leader puts the nation face to face with the facts. President Bashar will not be the one who lowers his head or the head of his people to anyone. Campaign against Syria is an episode in a series that targets all Arab countries without exception. The Israeli element is present in all events in the region. Developments prove that Israel is the most prominent beneficiary" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/11)

"Attorney of Louai Saqqa, a Syrian detainee in Istanbul: My client received an offer to give false testimony regarding former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri's assassination in exchange for a large sum of money" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/11)

"UN SecGen Kofi Annan welcomes President al-Asad's pledge to cooperate with the UN inquiry into the killing of former PM Al-Hariri. No sanctions are mentioned and no evidence of infiltration through the Syrian-Iraqi border" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/12)

"Arab member of the Kenesset, Talab al-Sane': The Palestinian masses raise voices high in solidarity with

Syria. The US threat targets all Arabs." (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/12)

"The Russian Liberal-Democratic Party organizes solidarity march with Syria. Chairman of the Party Vladimir Zhirinovskiy: We support what was in President Al-Asad's speech" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/12)

"Jordanian security forces arrest 12 persons for questioning in connection to Wednesday night bombing attacks in Amman. News circulated that 4 Iraqis carried out the blasts including a woman" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/12)

"President Asad talks on the phone with President Mubarak and reviews with Arab League Chief Amr Mousa current developments and the importance of unified Arab solidarity with Syria. Mousa: Syria is cooperating fully with the International Investigation Committee. Mubarak and Annan underscore the importance of dealing wisely with Resolution 1636" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/10)

"Judge Murad invites Mehlis to visit Syrian to sign a protocol of understanding and to discuss the best means and mechanisms of cooperation" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/10)

"Scores of casualties and hundreds of injuries in three explosions that rocked three hotels in Amman. Syria: We condemn the terrorist explosions and express solidarity with Jordan" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/10)

3. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Unity of Blood"

Samir al-Shibani, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (11/12): "Syria has always supported the Iraqi people and their unity and Arab role.... Damascus opened its doors to the Iraqis when they had no other place to go. Syria embraced the Iraqis who rebelled against Saddam's dictatorship and many of the current Iraqi political forces were born in Damascus and allowed to work without interference, dictates, or orders...."

"Despite all the fabrications and accusations, Syria is determined to continue its fraternal constructive role, which places the interests of the Iraqi people above every other interest, and which views the blood of any Iraqi as the blood of any Syrian. Syria will do everything in its power to bury any domestic sedition in Iraq and will do anything to maintain the unity of Arab Iraq -- land, people, and heritage -- so that the country can regain its civilized role after it breaks free from the shackles of the occupation and its supporters...."

"Al-Asad's Speech"

Ahmad Dawwa, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, said (11/12) "Al-Asad accurately diagnosed the circumstances in the region, the challenges and threats it is facing, and the foreign schemes that target its geopolitical status.... Al-Asad shed light on basic issues in the history and social fabric of the region, issues that anti-Arab forces are trying to distance or delete from the Arab memory, using media and political means and raising slogans that appeal to people's sentiments. The aim is to invade minds and hearts before invading countries, and sweep away cultural identity and national existence before sweeping away borders, as the president said."

"Western plans and deals ultimately seek to bring the Arab peoples to their knees and turn them into puppets in the hands of their enemies...."

"President Al-Asad's speech stressed adherence to national and pan-Arab principles and to international legitimacy. It accurately and elaborately explained regional developments. It showed utmost firmness against anything that threatens the security of the citizen and the homeland. It expressed willingness to deal with the current circumstances in a flexible manner so as to serve national and pan-Arab interests and to expose the objectives of the covetous ones. The speech will create the required effect in Arab society and help inject further blood into the bodies of the nation's sons, fighters, and men of resistance, who stood fast in the past and will stand fast in the future."

"Fear about the Loss of Truth"

Izz-al-Din al-Darwish, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (11/10): "Those who accuse Syria of not cooperating with the international investigation commission into Al-Hariri's assassination have bad intentions. They will keep saying the same thing whether Syria cooperates or not.... Syria wants the truth about Al-Hariri's assassination and is cooperating with the commission in a professional and judicial manner.... But what can Syria do if the US Administration, which dominates the Security Council and the investigation into Al-Hariri's assassination, has already passed judgment against Syria, asked its followers to support this judgment, and moved its lackeys in Lebanon to stir this wave of demagoguery, sectarian sedition, and slander against Syria?"

"Judge Mehlis was greatly influenced by the anti-Syria climate in Lebanon following the assassination.... Although Mehlis did not accuse any Syrian, those who benefited from Al-Hariri's assassination in the West and Israel, and even in Lebanon, regrettably, rushed to make up stories, level

accusations, and drive Mehlis to say things he is not convinced of and that the investigation has not proved....

"The investigation is not yet over. Syria is ready to do anything that will help reveal the truth and make the international community shoulder its responsibility. Syria fears nothing but politicization, which will bury the truth. If it makes some requests and presents some views regarding the investigation, it is because it really wants the international commission to arrive at sound results and issue a fair judicial verdict."

"Fishing in Disturbed Water"

Muhammad Khair Al-Jammali, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (11/10): "Israeli PM Sharon, in his statement that Israel will not negotiate with Syria or withdraw from the Golan Heights, is wagering on the current international pressure and threats against Syria.... The Golan will always remain an integral part of Syria."

"In the past Syria came under much stronger -- declared and undeclared -- campaigns of pressure, threats, and sieges, and it confronted them with a firm national unity that enabled it to emerge stronger than before. And Sharon will soon discover how wrong and fruitless is his wager on the current campaign of pressure....

"Syria is a key player in the region.... No force can cancel or curb its regional role.... Sharon's statements show that the party that threatens the stability of the region and the security and peace of the world is Israel, not Syria...."

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